

THE LONG RUN



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THE LONG RUN

BY

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The Long Run.

CHAPTER I.

RUFUS GROSBECK is writing a letter. A letter of great importance, you conclude, and one concerning which he has fully made up his mind for he writes with great energy, never stopping from first to last. You are not prepared, therefore, to see the letter, when finished, folded indeed, and enclosed in an envelope, but thereafter thrown upon the table and left there, unsealed und unaddressed, while the writer leaves the room. It is, perhaps, four

hours before he re-enters, picks up the letter still unsealed and unaddressed, and puts it in his pocket. Then he buttons one button of his rather ill-fitting frock coat, throws on his head the hat that lies near, and walks out of the house undoubtedly to mail the letter which, in his preoccupation with its matter, he has forgotten.

If the latter be his intention, his inadvertence continues alarmingly, for he walks swiftly past the dingy country store, one corner of which is appropriated to the mail department, past the next store, equally dingy, past the row of houses next, and down the hill which follows. Here he is lost to the village and the village is lost to him. His path stretches before him into wide rural loneliness. Only across the meadows, one, two, three, at his left, gleams the white and green of a little manse, where dwell

the rector and his wife, one babe, one maid and, just now, one visitor.

This visitor is well known among a large and important circle in the city as Miss Longworth. She, individually, has done nothing to make herself notorious except to be born and to bear her name, which latter is the notoriety, it being that of a wealthy and aristocratic family, time out of mind. The men of this family have always been stirring and influential citizens; the women languid and lovely ladies, as becomes women of blue blood to be, and the female Longworth whom we are about to consider is no exception, thus far, to her line. In fact, to any one's knowledge, she is exceptional in no way whatever. She is now a woman in the thirties and somewhat settled in her ways. And one of these ways, since Mr. Brown, the rector, has brought a wife to Stonewall, has

been to make a visit every summer season to Mrs. Brown.

These visits have come to be special events to a small circle in the village of Stonewall. From one and another reason, Miss Longworth has made herself interesting to the parties composing this circle. She has always been interesting to Mrs. Rev. Brown. Long before her marriage, Aggie Snowdon was devotedly interested in Miss Longworth; a matter not inexplicable to even superficial observers, for Miss Longworth was Miss Longworth, and Aggie Snowdon was one of six daughters of a minister's widow who was not an exception, in point of this world's goods, to the general run of minister's widows. Miss Longworth, although the only daughter of a doting but despotic mother, herself a widow and thoroughly Longworthized, insisted on liking whom she pleased to like, and Aggie Snowdon

was one of this selection. Aggie, for her part, made no opposition of her own free will to this predestination, and doted upon Miss Longworth disproportionately, as was proper under the circumstances. When she became Mrs. Brown, she did not desist from this devotion, although the fact that Mr. Brown did not fully enter into her feelings on this subject, somewhat mitigated its measure. On the other hand, Mr. Brown, although the most spiritual of men, had a sufficient conception of certain considerations inherent in social relations, to reconcile him to the position of third person in a temporary trio, and induce him carefully to cultivate the friendship and encourage the visits of Miss Longworth.

Outside of the manse, there were those to whom a visit from Miss Longworth was an interesting event. It was comprehensible to the least logical observer that a rosy young country girl, like Sallie Slycomb or her sister, should

be all stirred up in the anticipation and experience of rides and picnics and teas with the lovely lady who realized in her manners and presence and exploits all their highest colored dreams. As comprehensible was it that Farmer Slycomb and his painstaking wife, both consumed with parental ambition, should much solicit the patronage for their daughters of this very improving acquaintance. It was an opening wedge in the future of the family. For had not Miss Longworth already had Sallie to visit her at her own home in the city, and had not Sallie returned thence with a certain delightful veneer of *savoir faire* over all her rustic fibre, which reflected rose-wood lustre on the whole family? Then again, in respect to such personages as the Woolwiches—poor, miserable Woolwiches as they were!—it was clear as day how Miss Longworth's visits to Stonewall were interesting to them. They looked

hungrily forward to her coming, from the first time that little rat-faced Steve had wheeled her trunk from the station to the manse, and had brought home thrice the money he had ever before got for a like job, and had thereafter been "noticed" by the great lady in her researches in Stonewall, even to the extent of a visit to the Woolwich headquarters, which visit resulted in a systematic plan for the amelioration of the whole family after the best approved methods of work among the parish poor of St. John the Beloved's in the city. It belonged to the lovely and languid Longworth ladies to be benevolent.

Thus it will be seen that various persons in Stonewall were much interested in Miss Longworth, and upon grounds comprehensible even to that reader whose gift of observation is but ordinary. There remains, however, one person to whom she is of the greatest interest

at the moment of the letter-writing above noticed, and it is of him and of his interest that we must give some explanation, not trusting the reader of the most extraordinary observation to infer the facts without our assistance.

CHAPTER II.

RUFUS GROSBECK had become interested in Miss Longworth after a fashion vastly differing from that of the Browns, the Slycombs, or the miserable Woolwiches. His interest had been circulating about the zero point until ten days ago, although it is more than a year now since Miss Longworth has been a periodical visitor at Stonewall. This interest had been languidly increasing up to within ten days, when it suddenly rose to a degree which makes his interest, if ever, of interest to us. By *us* I mean any Emeline Longworth or Rufus Grosbeck who may live, and look upon these lines, and

any others who for any reason may, like the writer, feel an interest in either.

Grosbeck himself is thinking it all over now, as, with the letter in his pocket, he is pacing slowly up and down the leaf-strewn path. He is shut into a kind of privacy by the hill behind which hides the village, and by the distance and slope in front leading to the manse. The increasing dusk helps this sense of privacy, for the sun had set some time since. A sudden hot flush has flooded the western sky and, rolling up to the zenith, seems to peel away from the sky its veil of ashy cloud-film, which curls and falls off in thin evaporating strips. The stars show dimly here and there, gaining distinctness constantly.

Rufus Grosbeck walks quietly to and fro, stopping every now and then, as a man will whose attention is intensely subjective. He is thinking over that letter and trying to come to

a conclusion as to what he shall do with it. For the reader is greatly mistaken if he persists in the conviction that the letter written with so much energy and certainty of movement has, therefore, a settled destiny in the mind of the writer. "I will get it out on paper anyway" he had said in the writing. And, on reading it,—for he had been reading it over,—he had said: "It is well said, (Byron's letter to Miss Milbanke, the reasons alleged for its sending and its fatal consequences, had just then come to his mind) but it shall not go on that account. It shall not go, unless that is the thing to do!" And this is what he is about now, here in the dusky twilight. Trying to see *what is best*, under the circumstances.

The circumstances are the rub. He is trying to see the circumstances to be something different. Trying to pose himself in the midst of them with a different effect. After all, this

a priori inference may not be accurate; and he tries the *a posteriori*. That involves a retrospection. And so he paces back and forth, and halts and starts again, there in the twilight, but the obstinate circumstances stand still. It is all a picture and he is in it; and, though he has a critical perception of the faults in the arrangement of figure and drapery, he has no power to rearrange them. Only three days ago, he thinks, neither of them, figure nor drapery, had an existence. Now they cling hard and dry to an imperishable canvas!

Well, then, since he can do nothing with the last three days, he goes back of them and tries to re-arrange the past, but here succeeds as ill. The Circumstances still twit on facts and slide in a jumbled panorama before his vision; he is in them, but so confused and changeful in his position that, like the elusive figure of a dream, he can neither find nor lose himself at

will. But he persists in his attempt. With that trick which besets every man when Conscience draws all consciousness to the fiery focus of one time, with its electric light of Then and There, he is groping up and down the lengthened radii, back and forth, inspecting with a needless, fruitless nicety, trying to divert the light from that focus and so dilute its intensity.

But Grosbeck's confusion in viewing the circumstances of the past in which he and Miss Longworth are central figures need not overtake us. He is studying them with a purpose to eliminate their ethics as bearing upon himself in his present situation. We are not subjected to any such necessity, but may view them in the rôle, pure and simple, of sight-seers. As such, we may look upon the scenes of his confused panoraina, arranged in their proper rank

and succession, as they slide before our eyes with orderly distinctness.

Scene first of this panorama carries us back one year and some months, to the summer of Miss Longworth's advent to Stonewall. The occasion is no less than that of the annual church picnic, regular as the summer solstice, which at this return is graced by the presence of the guest of the rector's wife. Perhaps, indeed, no occasion could be contrived on which the graceful and gracious demeanor of so fine a lady could find more generous scope among the Brown and Slycomb constituency, not omitting the miserable Woolwiches. The moment at which we introduce ourselves at this religious orgie is somewhat later than the hour of collation. The generous tables present now but the lacerated remains of a prodigality of refreshment. All the Sunday School children are filled to satiety; even the

miserable Woolwiches, if never before or after in the revolving years, do now and here satisfy their souls with the fatness of "frosted" cake and lemonade. Fed to repletion are they, one and all, and out of their nursery for the time being, gathered lazily about the church melodeon, which has been cautiously removed to the grove for the purpose of accompanying the rendition of "Gospel Hymns," after refreshments. Here presides Miss Sallie Slycourt, with a gentle gentility suggestive of Miss Longworth, much as her own copy — for Sallie paints — in fresh, stout colors resembles the less striking original. This her mother, and others of the committee, seated on a hill near by, where they enjoy a select repast, observe with fondness. The compact figure of Mrs. Brown has made successive circuits of the ground, attended by the tall and slender stranger lady who condescends to all, and in her low-toned

affability wins golden opinions from all sorts of people.

"There, Emmy, I believe I have slighted nobody so far, have I?" ejaculates Mrs. Brown, standing with her friend aside for a moment. Mrs. Brown feels the responsibility of her position as minister's wife. This is her first summer in Stonewall, although the winter has preceded it, and she feels a degree of anxiety at this, her first really public performance.

"Although there was the Donation, Emmy," she admits, "on the whole, perhaps that was as much of a trial as this, only there were not so many outsiders, I believe. I *do* hope I shall see everybody and say the right things to people!" Aggie's gospel is one of peace and good will to all men.

"Oh, my! here comes Mr. Grosbeck," cries she, presently, as an elderly lady and younger man are seen to approach.

"Come, Emmy, I *do* want you to see Mrs. Grosbeck so much!"

Aggie had told Emmy long ago, in making her inventory of the parish, of "old Mrs. Grosbeck."

"She is the widow of the last rector but one, and is so different from the Stonewall people, Emmy!" she had said.

"They are all good, of course, but Mrs. Grosbeck is *different*, you know. I'm quite afraid of her sometimes! And Mr. Grosbeck, he is her son, and so very talented and odd!"

This latter item has not slipped Miss Longworth's mind when she is now brought face to face with the Grosbecks, mother and son.

Old Mrs. Grosbeck is very affable, with the something "different" to be seen at a glance. Aggie is fascinated, as usual, not being afraid this time, and the two fall into talk concerning the position of minister's wife, which being

very old to Mrs. Grosbeck and very new to Mrs. Brown, furnishes a topic of inexhaustive interest. The aged lady is not averse to giving, nor the younger to asking, advice. And so it came about that Miss Longworth and Mr. Grosbeck are left to entertain each other.

CHAPTER III.

MR. GROSBECK is put upon his best behavior by a swift compunction that comes as Aggie presents him to "my friend, Miss Longworth." It had been "my most intimate friend" when, three weeks before, she had invited him, coaxingly, to "call upon her very soon." This was before Miss Longworth came, and while Aggie was casting about for means to entertain her.

Miss Longworth had been in Stonewall now nearly two weeks and Mr. Grosbeck had not called. There was no particular reason for this remissness, however, except that there never was any particular reason why he should

call anywhere, and he always shirked such a duty as long as he could. He felt a little abashed now, however, in view of the slight put upon Mrs. Brown's invitation, and this feeling stimulated him to make what propitiation the present occasion should afford him opportunity for.

"Oh, Mr. Grosbeck, I always forget every thing when you are around," exclaimed Mrs. Brown presently, as her eye wandered, during the recital of a reminiscence of the older lady, and she was suddenly brought to a sense of what was due again by a look, thrown across heads, from her husband yonder. This conjugal reminder was perfectly intelligible to Mrs. Brown, as she saw deputations from "the denominations" filing in, in a friendly, after-dinner way. Self-respect prevented the *sects* from coming to the "Episcopal picnic" before refreshments, because to go and "eat without

taking anything " was much looked down upon by Stonewall quality.

"Do make me go and speak to the Methodists and Baptists! I see them coming,—and there is Mr. Brown looking at me! Do come with me, Mrs. Grosbeck, and see that I behave myself." And, the ceremonious old lady graciously assenting, Aggie added, in her girlish, bubbling way—"Mr. Grosbeck will take care of you, Emmy!" To this Mr. Grosbeck replied in a manner quite like her mother's, and yet not like anybody at all:

"Miss Longworth will take care of me I foresee, Mrs. Brown."

A smooth remark that, which might slip off the tongue of any society man and leave no remembrance of itself behind. It is, however, an inexplicable fact that these trifling words of Rufus Grosbeck's echoed long after in the ears of Emeline Longworth. Months after, when

there were carefully considered words of Grosbeck's in her mind, offered to her by him for careful consideration, this trivial remark would strike in among them and put them all to momentary flight. The never-understood change in his voice, his grave bow to the other ladies, which seemed their dismissal, the humility of the words, the authority of his manner, the charm of a sense of custody which stole over her — or did she herself imagine all these things and their effects into existence? — and something besides, probably the thing in it all which escapes analysis, and which, if anything, was everything, would all stand out vivid, novel, captivating as then. Now to a fresh, rustic girl like Sallie Slycomb, this sort of thing might be impressive; but it seems an outrageous irony on this world-worn lady that she should be impressed so instantly by this country gentleman's careless remark. Indeed, when

written as an influential fact, all this seems incredible. But the influential facts of our lives are rarely written. If it chance that we confront them in some self-assertion of themselves, we turn away from them and refuse to recognize them for what they are. For all that, these trifles are the grappling hooks which catch and fix us in our ruts. Up to this moment Miss Longworth had not been specially interested in Mr. Grosbeck. Amused, perhaps even curious, for his appearance, like that of most men who live solitary and studious lives, was incongruous, and Miss Longworth was not blind to incongruities. His very best clothes never relieved him from an air of seedy peculiarity in dress, and his efforts at small talk were, at best, but a counterfeit of conversation. His attempts to pass the current coin of society brought to that arbitrary exchange a medley of trashy half-penny phrases mixed with rare

obsolete *oboli* of unknown value. He had an ambition to appear like other people when with them, and to pass for a society man; and it hurt his pride to experience defeat in this role. He thought a man of his parts should be able to go into any society easily and admirably, without wasting his time in it habitually; in short, he wished to have the ability to appear at ease in all situations, without being willing to accustom himself to all situations.

On this occasion Mr. Grosbeck had not ceased to wag his tongue in the manner described, and Miss Longworth had become somewhat confused and fatigued in consequence. It was Mr. Grosbeck's own impression that he had, so far, made an admirable figure before this woman of the great world; but he now saw, for he was not lacking in perception, and, unfortunately, it was to be seen, that she did not share his own impression concern-

ing himself, and this aroused him and made him desirous to prolong the interview. He wished not to suffer the mortification which would follow him in the sense of defeat, if their interview were then terminated. He was not interested in Miss Longworth. She seemed to him feeble and fussy and without beauty, although agreeable enough to the senses of sight and hearing. Her make-up was harmonious, its effect pleasant, without being pleasing. Her tones were even charming, but there was nothing in them to linger in the ear. There was nothing about her to hold his attention, but this, that he did not hold hers. At the instant of discovery that he was boring her with what he supposed was the most savory pabulum that could be offered her, his curiosity was faintly aroused to see what sort of talk would interest her. There must be something to a person who can be bored, he reflected, even though

that person be that most transparent jelly-fish, the frippery, fashionable fine lady who belongs to the church and society.

At once, then, on being relieved of an audience which always made him uneasy, and being in secure *tête-à-tête*, he fell into a more natural role. He became, in short, himself; and, when quite himself, he was always fascinating, if not always agreeable.

CHAPTER IV.

“Miss Longworth will take care of me, I foresee, Mrs. Brown,” said Grosbeck, turning and bowing to that lady as she and his mother moved away. Then, squaring himself before Emeline, he demanded, “Well, Miss Longworth; now that you have me on your hands, what are you going to do with me?”

“I have not the least idea,” confessed Emeline sincerely.

“I thought so. Well, then, I have. But you must come and sit down.” And he led the way to a little eminence where ferns waved untrodden, and seated Emeline at the base of a

beech tree, throwing himself down near her. The artificial character he had assumed was quite gone, and he had now, in manner and attitude, the *abandon* of a boy.

"So you are really enjoying yourself here in the country?" commenced he.

"Very much," returned Emeline briefly. She was somewhat surprised to find herself sequestered and settled in this way, seated on the ground with her back against a beech tree. It was not after the Longworth-lady style to go off by themselves with strange men, and she never was seen to sit with her back against anything. But there seemed no help for it, and her mother was not present.

"So you really enjoy yourself?" persisted Grosbeck in a teasing tone.

"I did not say that, did I? Do not take me for an egotist," replied Emeline uninterestedly.

"Why not? Everybody is, in one way or

another. But what do you do, Miss Longworth? It has just occurred to me, and I am devoured with curiosity to know how you get through the days." His voice had changed. He had thrown a certain seriousness into it.

"Ah, you have touched a sore spot there, Mr. Grosbeck," answered Emeline, with a sudden responsive earnestness. "That is the worst thing about it; I do not see that I do anything but gaze from hill tops and piazzas on lovely landscapes. I am troubled about it sometimes." From where they sat the loveliest distant hills showed in summer steadfastness. Shadows from the white clouds above swept across them. The green of rolling meadows and the glisten of water lay between.

"But is nothing being done to you, then?" asked Grosbeck. "One who has eyes to see ought never to look unchanged on those hills yonder. Do not they do something to you?"

"Do what?" asked Emeline with a little sharpness of tone.

"Why, make you think and feel. 'Cultivate' you," answered Grosbeck, with an accent of slightly sarcastic quotation upon the last two words. His opinions of the kind of cultivation vaunted by these esthetic fine ladies was not respectful.

Miss Longworth seemed not to have heard his last words. She repeated the former:

"Think and feel! Oh yes, no end of that. But what does thinking amount to if one *does* nothing about it? or feeling — either!"

"But that is the way fine ladies live," suggested Grosbeck. He could not feel either serious or trifling.

"That does not ease my conscience!" replied Emeline.

Grosbeck found nothing to say at once. Presently he said kindly:

“But you certainly cannot do any harm.”

It occurred to him that this was very true, as he studied the aspect of this gentle woman sitting there so easily and stroking characterlessly and gently the ferns which he had been laying in her lap as they talked. He, like all men of his nature and habits, had no conception of the self-control and self-reserve that goes to make up this aspect of characterlessness, the pillow by which the woman of the world softens all contact with others, and smothers herself.

There was no estimate of her betrayed in Grosbeck's words to Miss Longworth. If to him harmlessness was a greater evil than capacity to do harm, she had no right to infer that as the meaning of his words. But she winced under them as if there had been contempt in them. It was her self-contempt that

hurt her. It was so certain to herself that she was helpless and harmless!

“Not even that!” The words escaped her. She would not have dreamed that she could have spoken so unguardedly to the acquaintance of an hour. She had no acquaintance to whom she spoke so, and she never had had one. But the swift-mood that had somehow, without her will it seemed, overtaken her, left her no leisure to analyze anything now, and the bitterness in her tone was an actual betrayal.

Could she never escape it—this consciousness of being nobody-in-particular to herself or to anybody else! If she never could—if things were so immutable and inexorable that she never could come to anything definite—then it was cruel that she could never forget it; that a stranger must discover it so soon and thrust it upon her recognition again! The inanity of Longworth-dom had tortured her so long!

With all her slick, purring composure, soft movements and slow, reposeful attitudes, she maintained, under all, a feline vigil for any means of escape. She knew there was a race different from the tame people among whom she was herded. She had seen people who were some-bodies-in-particular, but no one of them ever seemed to see her. People of energy and purpose and career seemed to have nothing to do with her. She has, again, to-day a sense of being labelled "Not Wanted!" and put away to be never wanted. This man, for all the absurdity of it, makes her feel that somehow the Unusual is hovering around and contrasting with her. But, spite of comparison, her antennæ are ever groping for the wild, the unhindered, the Free! In slumberous luxury upon the Persian rug, she dreams of the jungle.

Grosbeck was about to reply to this too much-meaning remark of Emeline's — "Not

even that!" "Why, that is a great deal to say, Miss Longworth. It is no small matter to do no harm in this world." He would have spoken in the same soothing kindness of tone which he had used in his last remark. But, somehow, he did not speak at all. He was silent for some moments.

It all flashed before him with the bitterness of her tone in the words she used. He imagined he saw her as she was,—the fine lady who goes to the country and idles away her time in insincere bucolics, lives her inane life out with year after year of such alternation from idle city winter to idle country summer—to him the most meaningless creature in the world. Her content was ignoble, her complacency intolerable. But if she were *discontented*!—that was another thing. The possibilities of pathos in such a woman's life had sometimes occurred to him. And now there came over him a con-

viction that here was such a woman — feeble, discontented, every way incapable, and *realizing* it!

After a while he said slowly and seriously:

“I see, Miss Longworth. But can nothing be done about it?”

He did not wait for her reply. She was not ready.

“After all, each one of us is an individual,” he went on. He was trying to answer his own question. Grosbeck was given to speculation on all possible situations of man or woman, but in his imagination of this one, he had never been able to see his way out. He could not see what *could* be done about it. If she had any power to *feel* even! But pulseless, passionless, spoiled with her advantages, prisoned by a caste all the more inexorable in its demands that (in our glorious republic) there is no name for it — he had never been able to see what such a

woman (it would be so different with a man!) *could* do about it.

“After all, each of us is an individual. Nothing can help that—or hinder. ‘*In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister.*’ Our limitations test us. It is what we amount to *in spite* of them that is the real thing. And no one can touch your own intrinsic life. You have your secrets with God and Nature, like the rest of us, and no one can violate their sacredness.”

“But one ought to do something in this life,” said Emeline, simply.

Another inscutable problem to Grosbeck! After all, the demands for room that hands should move ungloved and feet should step unfettered was so unreasonably reasonable!

“There is a great deal of delusion about this doing things,” murmured Grosbeck. His voice still had the tone of answer to an argument

with himself. "You remember what Schiller says — 'Seek'st thou the Greatest, the Best? The plant can teach it thee. What it does, *not* willing, that do thou *by* willing!' We have but to surrender ourselves to friendly elements. All nature is for us. The sun can only bless; the air only stimulate; the earth has for us only nourishment. Ours only is it to assimilate these friendly elements. The fern there has no power to resist all this conspiracy that makes for its development. We have. That is the worst and the best of it."

Emeline was wondering where the best of it was for her. What friendly elements were about her? The Longworth sun had never seemed to do anything to her but shrivel her, and she knew no other's ray. The Longworth atmosphere, if stirred at all, was rippled only by a Southern breeze which brought enervation in its exotic perfumes. The Longworth soil had

yielded all its phosphates to earlier scions, and no revolutionizing plough-share furrowed renewal.

“Yes, that must hold for us all,” continued Grosbeck presently. *‘In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister, und das Gesetz nur kann uns Freiheit geben.’* Freedom in the midst of our own bondage. Freedom out of our bondage. We must forge our liberty from our fetters themselves. You and I.

This in a tone of quiet assurance, his eyes fixed on the hills yonder, blue and distant, gleaming through the trees.

And more, a good deal more in the same strain. Grosbeck was nothing if not didactic, and at home anywhere except in the commonplace.

CHAPTER V.

MISS LONGWORTH had never before been so preached to. Never before had her case been formulated, and the subtle sympathy which was inseparable from Grosbeck's tones gave her a feeling of being understood, for once. She exultingly felt a sense of having, at last, been recognized as woman, in distinction from a Longworth. She came away from her first interview with Mr. Grosbeck, with a triumphant consciousness of having been discovered.

This, rather than that of having made a discovery; though the one involved the other.

That the protesting, interior self had been seen, necessitated one who could see it and who would see it. The *could* and the *would* waged war for precedence. That he could see her real self beneath the Longworth strata argued uncommon power and set him up among the seers and demi-gods. The Goethe and the Schiller he quoted seemed only his peers. Yet he *might* have ability to do all this, and never care to. Because he had done it, he must have thought it worth while. He must have faith in her, and interest in her. She remembered Grosbeck's words, and they repeated themselves constantly in her mind, but always they were ended with the — "You and I!" And so a certain concreteness ran already through this Unusual Abstract, and left a vague but constant impression upon her mind, that between her and this Olympian there was an understanding, a kind of ethical *tutoiment*.

Miss Longworth had never felt so much enjoyment at a picnic. When Mrs. Brown found her again and Mrs. Grosbeck claimed the attention of her son home, never had this very lovely stranger seemed so amiable to all, never so radiant, so gently exuberant to Brown, Slycomb and miserable Woolwich ilk, as now. The remaining minutes of the picnic became a *fête* under her management. Old and young were alike captivated by her affectionate interest in them. Silent, horny-handed farmers and brisk, critical farmeresses were, one and all, stormed and captured by her soft sieges. She emanated about her a shower of subdued scintillations in which everybody lit up. Aggie had never seen her most intimate friend so irresistible and was never so much so herself. The gaiety spread over the whole crowd, and, at last, when it was time, and past time, to conclude the

games, in which everybody played, and to break up the conversation, in which everybody talked, nobody wanted to go home. Aggie was delighted, and, conscious that she herself had behaved becomingly, was disposed to ascribe the bulk of the glory to Miss Longworth.

"You did the most to make it pleasant, Emmy dear," she said. "You were so sweet!"

And Emmy was just so sweet in her denial of having any part in that result. The Rev. John Brown himself was heartily honest in his acquiescence in his wife's claims for her friend this time.

"Quite remarkable in her way, my dear, and no mistake," he admitted, with the air of a man who means to be fair, at all costs.

As for Miss Longworth herself, she was conscious of her own exhilaration and its cause. Her case was that of the man who shines in

society from the stimulus of champagne; the shine is seen, the champagne may or may not be seen. With Miss Longworth her champagne was her own secret

CHAPTER VI.

IT would be vain to deny that the elegant Miss Longworth had great expectations of Mr. Grosbeck. She, herself, would not have denied it had the occasion of its admission been conceivable.

As a matter of fact, she had passed a more nearly sleepless night after the picnic than ever before in her life. A profound excitement banished sleep. Her thought might have been epitomized in the words — *There is, after all, help for me.* Her antennæ seemed to have suddenly come upon a crevice of escape from

the depths of the Persian rug; who could tell how that crevice might open, whither lead? Her case was like that of the boy who cannot sleep because when the night is past he is to start on his journey, outward bound, into life. It may be his start is only that of bundle-boy in the great city store. No matter. It is a start in the path of—to him—boundless possibilities. Miss Longworth's average imagination is scarcely up to that of the average boy. But this night her imagination is rampant. She certainly has got a start and that is not to be the last of it. Then, too, she has a feeling that this strange man has found out, or may, if he will, find out all about her, and that is enough to keep any woman awake nights.

Yes, Miss Longworth has expectations because she has intentions. She does not, indeed, think it would be the last if she, her-

self, had no intentions, for she concludes at once—it is a matter of course—he will have them. She supposes that so lonely (he must be lonely in such a place) a man as Mr. Grosbeck will be glad to pursue her acquaintance, and long avenues of usefulness to him rise up before her in the future. The path of her intentions fork that way also. But, aside from any disposition of his, she means to follow him up. An intense admiration of the being who, as it seems to her, has so calmly explored her soul, has taken possession of her. She determines that he shall help her, because he can; that he was presumably willing to do so, that she was anxious that he should do so, were asides. She intended to apprentice herself to Mr. Grosbeck, and the articles of apprenticeship unrolled themselves before her at great length. The preliminary lines she reads clearly, but

those which follow become confused, and the conclusion is blurred and wholly uncertain. What is certain is that she intends to learn a great deal from Mr. Grosbeck, and to commence right away.

All this does not seem at all unsuitable to Miss Longworth. She is not a young thing, smitten with love at first sight, that she shall be frightened away from making any sign of herself to the man who has bewitched her. It is no more unsuitable that she should be the one to make advances to this remarkable country gentleman, old and odd, than that she should "take up" anybody else; and Miss Longworth, as we have seen, is given to taking up individuals here and there, who strike her fancy or enlist her benevolence. Of course she knows what might be said by foolish or ignorant people; but, even if this were so, it

would not be unbecoming in her. At the bottom lay the blue blood. Longworthiness stood in any possible gap. On the whole, Miss Longworth looked forward to the next day with a zest that was an era in her hitherto languid life.

CHAPTER VII

MISS LONGWORTH looked forward ten next days before she again talked with Mr. Grosbeck. Then Mr. Grosbeck called with his mother, who made the effort with extraordinary graciousness. Mrs. Grosbeck highly approved the Longworths, whose antecedents were familiar to her, though she made nothing of that in her intercourse with them. She had suggested several times that Rufus should call to see the ladies, for Mrs. Longworth had now joined her daughter in the country, not as Mrs. Brown's guest, however, but as boarder in the comfortable home of a parishoner.

“Emeline is so infatuated with your little village, Mr. Grosbeck,” she said, by way of disclaiming any infatuation herself. “I really could not induce her to join me at the mountains, so I was induced to finish the season here; and, indeed, I like it very well—so quiet and retired. Quite the ideal of pure country life!”

It is a question if Grosbeck would have called at all, unless compelled to escort his mother. For he was entirely without intentions concerning Miss Longworth. She had not, spite of her own convictions, interested him. It was the old story. The discontented fine lady was poor pastime for a student. He hoped—at the time—he had said something to her that she would remember with profit; but he, himself, had forgotten what it was by the next day, and the interview left on him only an impression of *dilettanteism* on both

sides. It was natural to him to preach, and he was accustomed to being listened to in silence. To him there was nothing unprecedented in the occasion which formed an era for Miss Longworth. If the considerations concerning her, or rather, her class, which moved him to speak as he did at the time, occurred to him at all again, they came back diluted, and he had as little faith in the sincerity of her discontent with the narrowness of her life and nature as he had in her ability to make herself more room. The anticipation of a possible repetition of this interview did not interest him.

On this evening of the call, Mr. Grosbeck, in his complacent and ill-fitting rôle of society man, fell to Mrs. Longworth, his mother quite monopolizing the daughter, who was most assiduous in her attention. This arrangement, however, gave no one vivid satisfaction, unless it

might be Mrs. Grosbeck, who wished to investigate Miss Longworth. As for Emeline herself, when her callers left, she felt doubly disappointed.

Disappointment succeeded disappointment. Emeline saw Mr. Grosbeck at church and in the street, but he showed no sensitiveness in the recognition of her. Any other meeting which happened between them was in the presence of others and there was never an approach to his first *tutoiment*. Of course, however, she could not refer to it, and it harmonized with her ideal of him that he should be too delicate to do so; for he must have felt that it was all very unusual. He would know, too, how sensitive she would feel about her own admissions. In this line of argument she explained away her surprises and disappointments.

It was not until the day before that fixed for her departure from Stonewall that Miss Long-

worth met Mr. Grosbeck alone. She had gone, this September afternoon, to the same grove where the picnic had been held, and had sought the same spot where her feelings had been so excited weeks ago. She had a volume of Tennyson in her hands, but she was more occupied with her own thoughts than with his. It had swept all over her again—the misery of being nobody-in-particular, the unimportance of her life, the painful sense of being cramped and smothered by the things for which she was envied and admired. The future, full of evening drawing-rooms flashing with beautiful dress and fine manners; of crowded city-church services, where colored glass and waxy flowers and soft music and chanted litanies mixed soothingly; of high-art operas and concerts and receptions,—it all looked blank and gray to her vision; and all the more so because the vivid *chiaroscuro* with which this idealized man had lit

up new, satisfying scenes for her, had seemed to fade away from her and her life. She had hoped so strongly for help from this seer who had so divined her! Poor Emeline! her thoughts are very simple and very sad this afternoon.

She is thinking of Grosbeck now, wondering about him humbly. For it has humiliated her that she must conclude, at last, that she has no attraction for him. She thought he would see how he could help her and would come for that if nothing else. She feels herself feebler than she ever did before.

It happens—there is really no necessity that this convenient phrase shall involve the idea of chance—it happens that Grosbeck himself is wandering this very afternoon in this very place, with no thought of Miss Longworth however, or remembrance of the interview of which this spot was the theatre. But in his

wandering he wanders to this spot, and the sight of her there does not displease or disturb him.

His footstep behind her startles her, and she turns and meets his approaching face. He smiles and in a moment stands before her, hat in hand. She was rising, but he lays his hand on her shoulder and she keeps her seat. The coincidence of it all and—she does not know what (it is years before she owns that it was his hand upon her shoulder)—sends a sudden wave of color over her face, which she resents helplessly. He notices this, the blush and the resentment, and both occur to him for deductions afterward.

“I am glad to see you again, Miss Longworth,” he commenced. “I had supposed your allowance of time for Stonewall was exhausted.”

It all fell in with the general pitch of mood

in Emeline's mind that he should have thought her gone.

"I go to-morrow," she said simply.

"When we met here a month ago — or was it longer? I thought we should see each other often" said Grosbeck. "We seemed to know each other very well, at once."

What could she reply to this singular man? It was not the Longworth who was at a loss. The Longworths were never at a loss.

She wished to ask him why they had not met? It seemed unkind in him to have held himself so aloof. Resentment was alive in Emeline.

"Yes?" she said feebly.

"Why, yes," echoed he. "I wonder why we have not met oftener; because it has happened so? As if that accounted for anything! No, it was somebody's fault."

"You do not care for society, Mr. Grosbeck," suggested Emeline.

"Sometimes" said Grosbeck. "Now this afternoon, for instance, I was wishing for company. But in the main I am an unsocial creature, I fear. You think so, I know."

Emeline laughed. The Longworth would make no personal confessions.

"Of course, come to think of it, that is what you must think, for if any one is to blame because I have not seen more of you, it must be Rufus Grosbeck. He is a bad fellow, Miss Longworth; a person who makes no more of a blunder than of a crime. Yet, somehow, he always seems to stand in his own light. What do you think of him anyhow?" He asked this last in a tone of audacious curiosity.

"How can I think anything of so great a stranger?" responded Emeline.

"Of course"—he is scrutinizing her closely now (and she knows it), as he stands there leaning against a tree, his hat in his hand and his great Saxon face beaming down on her, "I knew you did not think anything of me. I am ground slowly, but exceeding small. But I will have my revenge next summer. You are coming again then, and I shall devote two weeks to you, by the clock."

It was one of Emeline's fixed purposes to come to Stonewall the next summer. But how did he know that? No matter, she could not be displeased at his quiet assumption of her purposes. She brightened visibly and said gaily:

"Then I shall certainly come for two weeks. I have no end of questions I want to ask you, Mr. Grosbeck. I have not forgotten anything you said."

She was falling into her normal place at his

feet. The woman had escaped from the Longworth.

“What did I say? But no matter. I can tell when you ask your questions.”

Grosbeck rather dreaded the subjectivity of too minute a recitation to him of his own eloquence. Of course this woman was morbid, as all such women were. His tone set the date for resumption of their introspections ahead one year, very decidedly. He looked at her book and, without pausing, said:

“What! Tennyson? I should have supposed Wordsworth instead.”

“In looking on the happy Autumn fields?” asked Emeline.

“There is but one goddess, and Wordsworth is her prophet,” returned Grosbeck. “You are a panthiest, I presume, Miss Longsworth?”

“I do not think I am very clear about what I am, Mr. Grosbeck. It flatters me to be

called anything. But please do not catechise me. You found me out so completely the first day you saw me! I was never so communicative.'

"I do not remember that you said much. I thought I preached, mostly," responded Grosbeck, indifferently.

"I said a great deal too much for my own peaceful recollection," replied Emeline, eagerly.

She was nearing the talk round to the "Woman-question" again, and, in its very worst shape, the Longworth-lady question. Grosbeck tacked.

"Forget everything that is not pleasant to remember, as I do," said he, quietly. And then, "What were you reading?"

"Nothing in the book, I think," replied Emeline. It was open at Elaine.

"Are you sorrier for Elaine or Launcelot?" asked Grosbeck, idly, as he glanced at the

open page. A faint curiosity sprang into his question, however. What could such women find in such poems?

‘I think I never compared my respective sympathies for the two,’ said Emeline.

“I think it was a mistake to kill Elaine, don’t you?” persisted Grosbeck.

“Why so?” asked Emeline, with coldness.

“Sweet is true love though given in vain!” quoted Grosbeck.

“And sweet is death which puts an end to pain!” retorted Emeline.

Grosbeck glanced at her. Could this modulated woman know anything of love or pain? It jarred on him to hear her speak so. Worse, that he had spoken so to her.

“We are not so sure of that,” said he presently. But whatever is uncertain, of one thing there is no doubt in heaven or earth—*that Love conquers in the long run.*”

He said these words (as if he expected, or had had, contradiction) with a vehement emphasis. But how he came to say them he could never tell. If ever one's *Δαίμων* put words into one's mouth he certainly did then. Grosbeck was conscious of no motive, or relevance in these words, but, on the contrary, a strong sense of their absurd irrelevance came over him as soon as they were uttered. He did not know what would come next, and resolutely closed his lips, switching the fallen leaves viciously, and looking hard at the ground. But danger of any further sentimentalities was averted by the sudden and sure apparition of Mrs. Longworth, who was perceived by Emeline to rise steadily over the intervening hills, with sails set hither.

Mrs. Longworth did not care to be quite so woodsy as her daughter, and generally permitted Emeline to have an hour or two the start

of her in all afternoon rusticities. But she had far too accurate ideas of being the right thing in the right place to affect no bucolics. She made it a matter of principle to sally forth under her leghorn hat and Japanese umbrella, every afternoon, soon after her daughter. The direction her daughter intended for the afternoon was always ascertained, and a time and place of meeting arranged, the appointment being as regular and religious between the two, as the church covenant.

At the view of this embodiment of Longworthism making steady strokes toward them and directing keen glances thither, herself, in her composed freshness and state looking a fair rival of her daughter, a change came over both.

"There comes mother!" said Emeline. She could have spared her from her side a little longer.

"A timely deliverance for you, Miss Longworth," laughed Grosbeck. "I felt symptoms of an approaching fit of verbosity again, and this time I fear we'd have had esthetics rather than ethics.

By this time Mrs. Longworth was in speaking distance and Grosbeck had wriggled, instinctively, into his dearly-loved rôle of society man. Mrs. Longworth had a certain blankness of visage as she recognized her daughter's companion, which Emeline knew well how to interpret. Between the two, Emeline's manner lost something of that repose which stamps the caste of Longworth. She had not yet wholly recovered from the ignominy of her confusion on meeting Grosbeck. It was something so new to her to lose anything of her elegant self-poise of manner, that her rage and resentment were far above the average, now that a fresh foolishness fell upon her under the eye of her

mother. She was no coward, however, and pride and courage restored her indifferent calm and grace, and the three fell into a set of becoming utterances.

After a sufficient amount of compliment to nature and each other, Mrs. Longworth reminded her daughter that it was nearly tea-time.

"I got rather a late start this afternoon, you know, Emeline," said she, with an idea that Grosbeck might think her behind in enthusiasm for the country.

Emeline was not aware that her mother's tardiness was exceptional, but made no reply. They started toward their boarding-place and Grosbeck strolled with them, with an air of attention to Mrs. Longworth, who chiefly kept up the conversation. As he swung the little gate between the ladies and himself at the cottage, Mrs. Longworth made him a formal and polite

adieu, with a little less brevity than might have characterized her had it not been the eve of their departure from Stonewall. To this graciousness Grosbeck bowed low and responded becomingly. To Miss Longworth he held out his hand and smiled.

“Next summer then!” he said; “Good-bye!”

And somehow the woman of society found no word to say but simply “Good-bye.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next summer came. In its last month the Longworths appeared again in Stonewall.

“They are only coming for this month,” explained Mrs. Brown to Mrs. Grosbeck. “Miss Longworth has taken the greatest fancy to this country, you know. I think it is almost strange, too. Of course, its very pretty, but then Emmy (Mrs. Brown felt that her most intimate friend might be familiarly named to Mrs. Grosbeck) has seen so much nicer, you know. Has been everywhere and seen so much! But Emmy *is* crazy about the country,

anyway. To tell the truth, Mrs. Grosbeck, I expect *I* am at the bottom of it."

Aggie felt that it must strike Mrs. Grosbeck as inconsistent with the grandeur of the Longworths to come from preference to so small and inexpensive a place as Stonewall, a second summer, in the character of tourists. She went on, smilingly, to explain.

"You know, Mrs. Grosbeck, they are coming to my house. I believe, actually, that it is nothing but that which brings them. Emmy does manage such things so! It will be a regular fortune to me, for they *will* not come unless they can feel comfortable, you know. So I have *had* to let them make their own terms, and I expect I shall grow rich on my boarders!" and Aggie laughed merrily. "It *is* so funny, you know. One's friends! But Emmy is very downright and makes such fun of me for feeling it."

Mrs. Brown was delighted with the arrangement.

“Emmy says I shall have a trip myself,” she bubbled on. “Of course, she understands our circumstances. Oh, I couldn’t begin to tell you how much she does for us. She is so downright and delicate, you know.”

Mrs. Brown was not morbidly sensitive.

So the Longworths, mother and daughter, came. Mrs. Longworth yielded to considerations based upon the Browns, as argument. Mrs. Longworth greatly enjoyed being benevolent, and dispensations to such people as the Browns had a finer flavor than any other, from the fact of their being “friends” people of parts really excellent and valuable. The character of discreet and unostentatious Lady Bountiful to these—as compared with miserable Woolwich or even well-to-do Slycomb constituents—high-caste beneficiaries seemed more to enhance

the sublimity of the line, than benevolence on a greater scale on lower planes. Then, too, she personally enjoyed Mrs. Brown and her baby, and she highly approved of Mr. Brown as a sound and orthodox clergyman. But she made no affectation of interest in Stonewall. It was monotonous and she could not see what Emeline found so superior in the views. As for the people — Sallie Slycomb was well enough as a pretty, buxom country girl, if Emeline must be always taking up such persons; but, as a whole, they were certainly disagreeable. She did not mention any other names. Probably she did not remember any one else, as an individual. On the whole, Mrs. Longworth had no hankering for Stonewall as Stonewall. She could not, and would not get into the way of going there summers; and Emeline should not. So this summer's arrangement was a compromise between the two. They would spend this month

of August, exactly so much and no more, in Stonewall.

Stonewall was unchanged. In the manse, the first installment towards posterity had been made in the person of an infant son.

“If it had been a girl, Emmy, I should have named it after you,” wrote Mrs. Brown, loyally. “But, being a boy, I must name it John, of course. The first boy has been John forever in Mr. Brown’s family, you know?” John Brown, as a patronymic had acquired a sudden historic distinctness and distinction, to the young mother, not inferior to that of Plantagenet.

In the special circle swept by Miss Longworth the previous summer, the objective points were undisturbed; the Slycombs advancing, the Woolwiches receding in prosperity, as was consistent and inevitable. The Grosbecks,

mother and son, were also *in statu quo* to all outward appearance.

"I see those Longworths are here to-day," said Mrs. Grosbeck to her son as they dined on the first Sunday after the arrival of Mrs. Brown's friends.

"Are they!" replied Rufus absently.

"Why, yes," replied his mother, with some impatience. "What *do* you look at, Rufus? I do not see how you could help seeing them."

Mrs. Grosbeck dislikes some of her son's habits. His abstraction at unsuitable times especially annoys her. Not that a scholar like Rufus could be expected to have his mind taken up with trifles. Of course, it is occupied with his studies, as is proper. But Mrs. Grosbeck expects everybody about her to behave suitably to the circumstances of time and place, and really Rufus carries his head in the clouds altogether too much. It makes a bad impres-

sion on people. But that was the Grosbeck of it! The Grosbecks all had a streak of eccentricity.

"There were a good many people there," suggested Rufus. "And you know we did not stop. They are on the other side, too."

He was sensitive about this failing of his. It stung his self-satisfaction as a man among men and a performer in ordinary rôles. He fought against it with a wasted energy, for he could not overcome it. The truth was, he had a study of his own which crammed his consciousness. And, in the quiet and ease of Sunday mornings as he sat a model listener, staring fixedly at Mr. Brown, it had come to be his fate to be the victim of no end of fresh and vigorous ideas. What things eluded him as he sought them in his study came to him, unsought, as he sat in the pew. It was like the hebdomadal ailments of the farmers for which

they must consult the doctor on their way to and from church; or the famous feminine Sunday headache. Often by the time service was over, Grosbeck was thoroughly abstracted, though vaguely conscious of this abstraction, and eager to conceal it, and careful to notice everybody who would notice him. But years of this going up and down the not so dim aisle of the little church, and filing past the same people every Sunday had hardened their hearts as well as his: so that, in case his mother had staid at home, he often came away unable to stand any examination as to "who was at church?" It had come to be rather a sore point with him. It made him uncomfortable to realize that he looked sometimes at people without seeing them. Now that his mother spoke of it, he had an indistinct remembrance of a tall slender lady, with a good deal of agreeable drapery, somewhere among the

people this morning, as a person often sees the most noticeable figure on a crowded canvas. Probably, that was Miss Longworth. What a pity it had not occurred to him before! Grosbeck's thoughts of this sort were mainly after-thoughts lagging along too late for presentation, always.

That Miss Longworth! Yes, he recollects all about her now; the picnic, the preaching, and all. He wonders what is her hobby now—if it is still herself! She has forgotten him, possibly. He must see about that. It is rather a dry time with Mr. Grosbeck. He is tired of study and feels an inclination to diversion. If he did not think that she might fasten to him inconveniently, he would call right away. But such empty-headed, idle ladies are great burrs! So she had come again, had she? Thus he mused over his Sunday cold roast; and when his mother said, presently:

"They are very nice people, those Longworths. We must call upon them in a day or two."

He only replied:

"I am at your service."

They called the latter part of the week. Grosbeck perceived at once that he was not at all forgotten. Miss Longworth frankly showed her interested remembrance of him, but made no allusion to any special previous meeting with him, though there was a certain confidingness in her manner, when talking with him alone, which intimated something of the *tutoiement* in which she still believed. He was so exactly as she remembered him!

As for Grosbeck, he found Miss Longworth very different from his remembrance of her, and vastly improved. Perhaps this was partly because his remembrance of her did not do her justice. But that did not account for all the

difference. Evidently there was some new vitalizing influence upon her. Probably she was engaged! His speculations took a very short cut to this conclusion. Her circumstances or her nature did not generate for her any such metamorphosis outside of an affair of the heart. To fall in love was the only chance for her as it was for most women. Well, it was worth while, for it made another woman of her. Her elegant aimlessness was, somehow, much mitigated, and the general lacklustre air about her was quite gone. He discovers that she is exceedingly good-looking. After all, a thoroughbred city woman's get-up is a comforting sight. The harmony of tone and tints and attitude is very agreeable to see and feel, for one does feel them. This is his consciousness as he, silent himself, observes her as she talks gracefully to his mother. It is pleasant, after all, to see this fine lady and have

her around, and more normal, he reflects, to the Grosbeck blood than the society of Stonewall commoners. He feels it in him to be fairly entertained, occasionally, by Miss Longworth.

Under such auspices does Emeline begin her second campaign, laying, thus promisingly, her soft sieges to the heart of Rufus Grosbeck.

For why attempt to deceive the reader as to the facts in the case? The effort could scarcely end in self-deception of the writer as to its success. The only one at all in the dark, I fear, in this matter is Grosbeck himself; and his only—but sufficient—apology, were he now to be suddenly made aware of the facts, would be that this situation was entirely phenomenal in his experience. It was the only one of its kind, so far. Thus would he exonerate himself from the charge of self-depreciation as cause to this unambiguous effect. For Grosbeck was

as far as any man has ever been—who can measure the distance—from feeling himself suited by any secondary rôle in the cast for a love affair. It was more likely to be himself than anybody else, he always decided, when any woman favored at all adequately with his acquaintance showed symptoms of the grand passion. But this woman had not been so favored, and, in her case, another man must be encumbered by her tenacious affections. Under the circumstances she was not to blame, and her attractions suffered no disparagement. With him it was to be seen and to conquer; but if not seen his fatality of conquest suffered no impeachment by another's, so that there was no reason why he could not conscientiously approve of Miss Longworth in the situation to which he predicated her. In his younger and foolisher days he had never felt any great degree of interest in engaged girls. But he was

no longer a boy and she was not a girl, and Mr. Grosbeck really found Miss Longworth very agreeable company. There was no sense of responsibility about anything now; he was not bothered by any fear that she might remain on his hands in some tedious way, after these pleasant interviews were past. He could wake her up all he liked and have no bill to pay for his entertainment.

So these two talked and walked all these glorious harvest days freely as boy and girl. He had forgotten all about the contract for the promised two weeks, and Miss Longworth had made no allusion to it. She saw Grosbeck nearly every day of her stay in Stonewall.

CHAPTER IX.

AN unexpected event prolonged Miss Longworth's allotted month in Stonewall to nearly two months. A sudden exigency in real estate business brought a peremptory summons to Mrs. Longworth from one of the male members of the line, to present herself upon the field of her own interests and stay around conveniently if she would secure them from damage. This field was extensive and left the elder lady little room for other anxieties. She lost sight of any maternal suspicions which might fill the nest of leisurely incubation, and fled to the scene of possible disaster, leaving Emeline to follow

when affairs were more settled and she could herself repair to her city mansion.

So it came about that Emeline's furlough was extended to something over three weeks into September, weeks that have gone golden and noiseless like the others, and have now come to a close. With her, as with so many another, the whole of life is now but to wait before a fallen curtain, whose rising shall reveal the pathway of life's future; that impenetrable curtain which we call to-morrow.

It was on this day—the last one of Miss Longworth's stay in Stonewall—that the drama fell which is unrolling its scenes to Grosbeck, as he paces there in the twilight all the time we have been telling our story up to this point. This day has brought upon him those swift and thronging consequences which must account for the letter in his pocket, and for several other items foreseen or unforeseen by the

reader. As Grosbeck sees this last scene we may see it; it will look the same to both.

And this is what is to be seen. Ferns waving in a breeze that grows gentler as the afternoon wanes to sunset. Under foot, beds of moss, grey and green, dappled with the russet gold of fallen beech leaves and the scarlet of vivid squawberries, woven and wound with long lacings of ground pine and ground cedar. Towering pines whose tapering tops seem to surge with the sound of sea-surf against an invisible shore, and tall, erect hemlocks with only a stiff cap of green at the summit of black trunks. A tawny squirrel glancing up and down and athwart the fallen trees which are lying everywhere, streaked with the sunshine and spotted with lichens. A snowy rabbit erect upon its haunches, with drooping forefeet and pink pointed ears; a dusky woodchuck wriggling along the ground farther off. The sun laying

long bars of gold amid the greens,—pathway of that Presence which invests the scene and steals a reverence upon the intruder. One must be very pure and true who hears not here, the mandate — *procul, O procul este profani!*”

And this was felt by the intruders in their respective fashions! The tall, willowy figure of the lady bending over the ferns, taking one here and there gently from the mould, stepping lightly from mound to mound. The man lying with uncovered head upon a log yonder, following her movements with an indolent pleasure in his gaze that misses not an item in the make-up of the scene. Neither one is speaking. Their intercourse has come to be that of old friends who feel no need to keep up the conversation. Neither is jealous of the silence or speech of the other. She has the tact which chats or is silent to suit his mood. He always does as he feels. If he talks she is de-

lighted to listen. If he is silent she waits, but never lets the silence become awkward or burdensome.

To-day, however, the silence is full of something, and she does not break it. It is something between them not felt before. It may be with her the consciousness she does not for a moment lose that it is her last day in Stonewall. At the same time she is confident that this something is not to be broken by to-morrow. A sense of this as certain as herself, as sure as life or death or God, and yet ——! That is as near as we may come to this very gentle lady's line of thought, or,—should we say? —feeling! It has been thus with her a long time. She was waiting, her soul listening. Her faith never faltered that the moment would come when another's recognition of this something would transmute it from subjective to objective possession. This has not come, so

far—why shall it not come to-day? To-day she could not chat easily in the silences that fell between her and Grosbeck. For the first time in her life she felt as though she knew how it is that sound and sight are interchangeable. Mrs. Browning's line—"and through the word I think their happy smile is heard"—came to her mind. It seemed as if in this trance of Nature, or of herself, she knew not which, sounds could be seen.

"*Wenn Alles schweigt!*" murmured Grosbeck finally. She turned. She had not caught his words, but she started and stood like a hemmed-in creature whose pursuit has ended. Her own consciousness was so intense she could not tell, in a moment after, if he had spoken aloud or not. Presently she sat down.

"*Im stillen Haine geh' ich oft zu lauschen wenn alles schweigt,*" repeated Grosbeck dreamily. "To listen, Emeline, when all is still"—!

That means something, doesn't it? It makes me think of Mrs. Browning's angel's smile being heard — do you remember? ”

It did not seem strange to Emeline that these lines in her own mind should be in his.

“ Yes,” she said.

Something struck him. In his own oblique fashion he pursued the thought.

“ But Mrs. Browning and Goethe were not in the same boat when they sailed into this fancy, I suppose. Goethe was in love, you know. That's what made him hear things that other ears were deaf to. I suppose he could *hear* one of Lili's smiles, just as Mrs. Browning did the angel's. If one is in love I suppose a sixth sense absorbs and embraces all the others.”

He paused a little, and then went on:

“ That's a pretty thing of Goethe's, now, isn't it? How it runs in one's head! ”

"Ich denke dein . . . !"

He repeated the four verses in that strange vibrating voice which carried the pain and the passion of the words. He could never say them any other way.

Emeline did not understand the meaning of every word of Goethe's German, but she felt the meaning of the poem as a whole. And how could it be but that it was meant for her?

"Ich denke dein!" The cadence of those words, as her heart caught and held them, was intolerably tender. Grosbeck had not looked at her at all in their recital, but lay with face upturned to the blue sky showing richly through the golden foliage of beech leaves over-head. But Emeline expected that gaze. Any instant he might turn those eagle eyes upon her. Any instant it might come! He would see all—she was helpless to prevent it. What could she do—and what did she care to

do? What was it that she wished to conceal from him? She knew that she had never made any confession of her love to him — that could not have happened yet. But, oh, he knew it, he knew it! In the long winter — it all seemed winter between parting and meeting — she had reasoned it all out so clear. Philosophy confirmed feeling. The nature of things was on her side. And her logic — was it not that of the seers, Mrs. Browning and Tennyson? — spite of Elaine? Every principle of right and wrong and retribution gave their testimony on her side. Her part was only to wait. Had he not, himself, epitomized it all, hundreds of days ago, when he said, “Love conquers in the long run?” If “the course of true love never did run smooth,” it was, after all, only the short run that was troubled. Love conquered in the long run! Way back in those days she thought that he — who saw so

soon all there was to see—must know that he had won her then, and she believed this because she believed he loved her with a love that commenced then. And he had said this for her, to her, about her. It was all consistent with her theory that he should not have spoken yet. It was like love, like him. Words might linger—mere words. She had been gloriously happy and blessed in this interval of time. It had been with Emeline, we see, quite like the probation period assigned to converts in certain religious persuasions, before confession is made, and union publicly cemented with the church. It may be that an accurate analysis and comparison of mental exercises would reveal an involution of the same faculties in the one case as in the other, and put a similar strain upon each.

In Emeline's case faith had been equal to the strain, and, because equal, unconscious of it.

Doubt had found no room for play in her mind. Her thoughts had been busy with the numerous progeny of faith. Very practical points had been provided for, in her mind. She had thought over everything, was prepared for all the Longworth set could say, or do. She was ready to encounter all argument and contradiction and to reconcile all incongruities and inequalities. For Emeline's love by no means annihilated in her mind the sense of certain clear incongruities and inequalities; she had passed, some years before, the age at which such inconsequence was possible. Neither was her mind of that fibre that she could dispose of such difficulties by handing them bouyantly over to that vague agency whose unkept promise it is that "*these things will all come out right!*" Not at all, for on the contrary, Emeline's ingenuity had been well exercised to meet future exigencies; and ner

resolution had received a thorough military education. Farther ahead, too, she had gone. The woman—in the hush of innermost consciousness she whispered to herself, *the wife!*—came out clear and finally disenthralled from the Longworth, and, in the sphere of that future, considered ways and means, matters which she felt would and must be hers to manage. The most homely details were familiar to her love's frequent rehearsal of this future. And yet—and yet—now that it was coming, was here, she shrank and trembled! It seemed to her that she could not bear that he should turn and look upon her. Everything stood still. *Alles schweigt!* Yet It was everywhere. The mosses throbbed with It. The beech leaves melted their gold out dazzlingly under Its radiance. The squawberries seemed sphered and palpitating blood-drops. Everything lived, but held its breath. She could never tell how long the hush was.

CHAPTER X.

It was some time before Grosbeck spoke. He reclined upon his log, with face still upturned, looking full of comfort and confidence. The comfort sensuous and nervous; the confidence a kind of arrogance that often looked forth from his eyes, and seemed to appreciate, as his own, any pleasant possession toward which he might stretch his hand. Emeline knew this look and felt that in meeting his gaze now she should encounter it.

Grosbeck's thoughts were not, however, in that taut, golden line along which our pure, simple Emeline conceived them. Yet, she was in

them. As he lounged there he had before been following her movements among the ferns and mosses. Saturated with the sunshine, soothed with peace and beauty of the scene, fitted there to his log like a lichen, she had filled the musing of his mind, and his speculations were of her, just as a squirrel or rabbit, had either happened to enter his idle sensorium, might have sent him speculating on animal instinct or the transmigration of souls. He noticed that she was very quiet this afternoon, and there was something about it! She was a graceful woman, though over tall! Every woman could not manage two or three superfluous inches so well. Who was this man she was in love with? Some genteel fellow or other, with some catch or other that other genteel fellows of her set did not have, by which she could idealize and idolize him into extraordinary proportions—for Grosbeck was conscious that

something out-of-the-common must be mixed with the bait that would hook this fine lady. Likely as not some clever preacher, possibly a Methodist or Presbyterian, furnished with a double bank of keys, one of which responded to the touches of religion, art and ethics with its treble tremolo, the other thrilling with ambiguous basso tones, evolved by the solicitations of certain susceptibilities toward Longworth loaves and fishes. The tune need not be actually discordant. It was just such a fellow who would wake up this sort of a woman. He would come at her with sledge-hammers of personal devotion, having already made her malleable with blows of pulpit eloquence. If he had not a passion for her he would have a passion for hers. If he did not love the woman he would love the Longworth.

At first that seemed unfair to Emeline, but, after all, it perhaps was an even thing. She

got the good of it, just the same, and the man would, too. If deceived at all, neither need ever be undeceived. A fine lady of this type was too selfish to have an enthusiasm which did not involve herself; too limited to have it for a pursuit or an idea; for anything but a person. It was only — could be only — the directest influence that could develop purpose or passion in a nature so filtered of energy. It must be a man full of strong red blood who could vitalize her bluish serum. Well, he hoped it was a good man whom Emeline was going to marry. She deserved a good man. She was a good woman. It was in this strain, ("Oh, Iago, the pity of it!") that Grosbeck mused, and became interested in his speculations. After all, could such a woman love? That long hand, drawing the fern so gently from the mould, without bruising a frond or breaking a stem, could it clutch anything! What sort of a grip

could it give! Could the blue blood ever turn to red and throw off its feebleness? If Emeline had been sitting near he would have pursued his studies experimentally. No considerations of breeding or humanity would have embarrassed his mood for vivisection. But she seemed interested in getting the nicest ferns and was moving here and there; so he let her alone. She is, of course, thinking of her lover, he says to himself. That is the under-current of everything now. Probably in that careful selection of ferns she was adjusting them mentally upon the walls of her boudoir and drawing-room that was to be. That was what made her so still;—by the way, how still it was! He turned himself and looked up through the gold leaf of the beeches. To lie and look heavenward in a forest is to banish common-place speculation. The Presence in the temple is felt. It fell upon Grosbeck from

the luminous leaves, and cleared his countenance of all save worshipful reverie. Somewhere in its train those words of Goethe's came, and he murmured them aloud: "*Wenn Alles schweigt!*" Presently the whole poem came, as we have seen, and something in the last verse, perhaps — or the consciousness that Miss Longworth was quietly sitting near him listening,—brought her and his speculations concerning her back to his mind.

"Pshaw! Why cannot a person keep still?" he said, rising and shaking himself. "It is all over now—this full silence. The goddess, like the squirrels, will not bear the human babble. If we would enter into her holy of holies we must 'listen when all is still.'"

"Why don't you say something, Emeline?" he added, in a moment, with a sudden irritation in his voice. All at once the silence between them jarred upon him instead of har-

monizing with his mood. He turned and looked at her.

She had not heard his words, only his voice, and had felt his gaze. She only realized that the moment had come when he should *see*. It seemed to her as if her love was bare beneath his eyes, and a swift wave of shame—such a proud shame!—toppled over everything else and bore her down under it. Lower and lower the proud head fell, the woman striving with and overcoming the Longworth. All her consciousness was filled with whirring wheels; nothing clear but his voice, his eye.

“You needn’t mind if you can’t talk of anything but that fellow you are in love with, Emeline. I know all about that, and I’m willing to be cut out and talk about him if you won’t talk about anything else.”

With these words for an opening wedge, Grosbeck meant to pry into the phenomena

of Miss Longworth's passion and satisfy his curiosity concerning it. But his self-rehearsal left him speechless when the curtain rose.

What was this? It came upon him, the sight of this proud lady so distressfully confused, like the sight of her in some sudden danger, only that then he would have sprung to her side to rescue her. But now he is paralyzed in his place, and, without realizing that he speaks, cries out:

“Why, Emeline!”

Only those two words. In a moment more he turned, for men have instinct if not intuition of these matters. Perhaps, too, it was resistance to a counter impulse that put him some paces away, and employed him with sudden energy in freeing from its tree trunk a fine fungus he had observed while lying in his listless mood, meaning to get it for her when he rose. He was a long time about it, but

finally he laid it in her lap, standing behind her.

“That’s a good shape for a bracket, is it not?” he asked practically; and then, without waiting for an answer, added: “We must go home, Emeline; you will take cold there; see, the sun is setting!”

His voice was unspeakably indulgent and kind, but she said nothing, and gave no other sign of having heard him than by rising and following him as he, without looking at her, strode on before. The hanging branches and underbrush made his excuse for this, but he did not hold them now, for her to pass, as he had in entering the woods.

When they came into the meadows he fell back at her side, but did not at once speak or look at her. If he said anything, it must be anything but comment or curiosity concerning her mood; and, somehow he was not ready to

affect the irrelevant and common-place. In fact, a singular excitement was gaining upon him. He had been trying to analyze this thing with all the logic he could summon at the moment's notice, but found himself bewildered beyond precedent. One instant he called himself a fool for the sudden suspicion that he was the man Emeline loved; for what possible proof had he of it? What but a baseless fancy bred of his egotism was it which had struck this conceit into his mind. True, her confusion was unaccountable otherwise, but that was to say that he could not account for it. Perhaps, after all, he did not understand her so well as he had supposed. And then into his reasoning would suddenly fly feeling, a presentiment perhaps, but tenacious and self-asserting as a bat in one's hair. And it would alternate the man's reason against his instinct. The alternation made him curious, and curiosity ran

up to the boiling point. It was absurd, this situation. He must understand. She must understand. Why did she say nothing? It was the first time the established *comaraderie* between these two had been embarrassed. And then it rushed over him with a flood of novel pathos: What if she did love him? What would it be to evolve the woman that was so smothered, and to watch the leading of the *ewig weibliche*? The query kindled something in him. He felt the magnetism of this conjectural passion at his side and many wavelets of emotion played upon him as he walked.

The sun had set when they had emerged from the woods, and by the time the path where we had seen him pacing alone was reached, the early September twilight had set in. A few paces more and they had reached, still silent, the little bridge that arched above

the little stream running fast away below. Grosbeck halted.

"Listen, Emeline!" he said.

He closed his eyes to listen. It was a trick of his. The brook spelled out its vocal cipher in his ears, catching up into its hieroglyph all the mystery in his mind. In a moment more he would think of the right thing to say.

But before this moment came Emeline looked at this man she loved. A desperate will arose in the woman, that was not to be denied.

As if he had been touched, he opened his eyes to meet hers. As if those long, narrow hands, filled with ferns, had drawn him with irresistible power, he bent toward her. In an instant that happened which he would, an hour ago, have deemed as impossible to occur as for the sun to whirl into the earth—his lips rested and lingered upon hers.

"Do you love me, Emeline?" he said.

Her voice sounded out clear and solemn, as if before the marriage altar and a world of Longworths. "I do."

She stood erect and noble, her face transfigured. To Grosbeck's imagination her form seemed to expand and grow colossal, like a goddess. Unspeakable tenderness seemed to well up and overflow her, till her aspect was glorious and awful.

What had befallen Emeline in the wood befell Grosbeck now. Confronting this transfigured woman he instantly realized their mutual relations. A chasm deep and broad opened between him and the woman he had just kissed. Standing still so near that her dress brushed his hand, he felt immeasurably distant. In such supreme moments consciousness does not detail the items of the situation separately and in succession. They rise like a panorama of the whole, grouped and in proper relation be-

fore the vision. Every circumstance from the meeting at the picnic, more than a year ago, in which any significant word or look had passed between them, stood out as clear in its measure of contribution toward the present as did the deed and words of the minute past. What of retrospect happens to a drowning man, happened then to Grosbeck. The pain, the pity, the pathos, and — as potential an item in that retrospect—the vague pledge of its consequences with a terrible sense of self-intrication, overwhelmed him. How long all this lasted he could not have told, but he heard the man's voice which broke the spell—it seemed another man who spoke—saying, "Good night,——!" and her slow answering, "Good night, dear, good night!"

And Emeline walked the little path to the rectory gate, alone.

CHAPTER XI.

The next morning Grosbeck appeared at his *tête-à-tête* breakfast with his mother, exhibiting every sign, to her practiced eye, of an approaching hunt. She was not surprised therefore, when, on rising from the table, he said: "I saw some partridges in the woods the other day, mother, and I'm going for them to-day."

But she was surprised when, early in the afternoon, she saw him striding across the meadows homeward, and heard his study-door close almost immediately after the street door.

It is here and now where we first saw him writing the letter which lies in his pocket as

he has been pacing there in the twilight where we left him. We have seen what he sees, and, in the time it has taken us to do this, he should surely have come to some decision and finished his meditations.

Well, he certainly is not where we left him. Neither do we come upon him at any point in the path between this and the little white gate of the rectory. He may be, doubtless he is, within the modest manse settling his affairs in person; indeed, he must be there, for the lady leaves to-morrow. In this case we shall not dare to intrude, but will go back and spy about his study for any hints that may further our acquaintance with Mr. Grosbeck, and contribute toward our opinions as to his future.

But, alas! here in his study is the man himself, and he seems to have come to no decision, after all. If so, it is not clear to us what possible relevance his present occupation has to this con-

clusion. He is writing again rapidly—but not uninterruptedly. He stops constantly, casting sharp looks upon the manuscript leaves lying — *ludibria ventis*—all about his cave, and peering now and then into the French and German as well as English volumes that are piled around. These books bear titles that show them to be works on the science of geology, and are useful to him in the paper he is preparing to prove that the firmament as used in the Scriptures means, beyond a question, the crust of the original earth. He has decided to do nothing else until this argument is completed; and that may take him some weeks. Afterwards, if need be, he will review this other affair.

The letter lies where he has irritably thrown it on coming in. His mood is not one of self-satisfaction; for he has not at all succeeded in clearing his mind as to what is “best to do,

under the circumstances." He has groped about there in the circumstances until the situation, from being sublime, has sunk to the ridiculous, almost. Nothing seems so absurd and disgusting to him as hopeless perplexity. He has a great pride in *seeing* and then doing. He believes, with Goethe, that with regard to most of the affairs of life, it is "but to perceive and then to perform." But this time he cannot add with his German master, "it is very easy." Perhaps you and I are already suspecting, reader, that the difficulty lies in the fact that the most influential item of this perplexity of Grosbeck's is one which he will not admit to be present. Of course, if this be the case, he can never arrive at a solution. Characteristically he throws the whole subject aside with the letter, though that he intends to put away after a while.

"It will keep," he says. And he thinks "so

will she — and I. It is foolisher to keep tinkering at this muddle, than to leave it alone until I see things more clearly." And he turns his back, bends his head over his table and goes on with his manuscript.

And now, if ever, we may look into this unfriended epistle and judge for ourselves concerning its adaptation to the situation. Read, then, for it is our last chance!

"Emeline, my friend, I have to seek your forgiveness. I have done you a wrong, a grievous wrong, for which a hot shame burns my cheek — no less than blasphemy against your womanhood. It is this which I have to ask you to forgive, ask you if you can forget; though I know not what will ever wipe it from my consciousness.

"I seek in vain for self-justification. Is it, then, a matter to dwell so heavily in memory, that some tender words should be said in separating, that friends should kiss in parting?

"All the same, the memory comes back to me

freighted with a mill-stone's weight. The weakness of your majesty is pain to me. You stand so helpless, Emeline. On a sudden there has come upon you so pitiful a pillage of all your reticence, your self-containedness, your dignity of disguise. You stand so uncovered, Emeline. All at once, from your slender hands has fallen mercilessly the power to droop so gracefully aside. Your face, always so harmonized to the mild emotions of good society, has lost its veil and confronts me in the divine distortion of its infinite passion — *Das ewig Weibliche!*

“I ought never to have seen this sight. Never to have evolved it by the swift impulse which flung my arms about you and laid my lips on yours — though I swear to you, Emeline, that I knew not what I did!. My sin is that of one who, with no worship in his soul, invades the innermost of the tabernacle, only to see with his eyes its hushed and sacred splendor, to pilage with his hands its celestial treasure. Such is my folly, Emeline! Above all soft words of sophistry excusing, reducing, echoes the scream of conscience — Fool! Fool!

"You love me, Emeline! I have not sought to win your love in our past pleasant friendship. I had not consciously lifted a finger to beckon you to me. I had not cared to.

"Now I do care. I have lifted a finger to beckon and to grasp. I have seen the great sun of your never before sun-filled soul, rising under my eyes, welling out its billows of radiance. I have caught a glimpse of what your nature's landscape, emerging for its twilight, would unroll to my vision, and a greedy, esthetic passion leaps toward it. I would explore that landscape.

"I do not love you, Emeline, but you love me! An old, too-familiar passion of research and acquisition kindles beneath your beams. It would never rest until it had hunted you to your last cover and captured you there! and, before God and all the witnesses in the background, I will not move an inch!

"Let the past suffice!

"I take your long hands, Emeline, and fold them over your heart. They must be its shield. Go your way, and let me go mine! What need has been subserved, we shall, per-

haps, some day know and acknowledge with satisfaction. For the present, we can have no more to do with each other. Yet, sometime and somewhere, if we walk along the same lines, we must meet!

“You do not admit of any pity. I do, and I think you will not withhold it.

“Good bye, then, Emeline! The cadence of your “Good night, dear! good night!” will never get so far back in any corridor of time but I shall hear its echo. And I say now, good-bye. It is the only good thing I can say.”

CHAPTER XII.

Common sense, practical people will consider that, with the brave epistle above, our story must have reached its conclusion; one "lame and impotent," perhaps, yet, necessarily, the end. For, collecting from its jargon that small gist which we can comprehend, it would seem tolerably clear that our modern Elaine is most thoroughly jilted. We are now prepared for the barge and the burial, with such modifications of its pomp and circumstance as must be admitted in the case of an Elaine Longworth. Also, we shall expect a suitable disposition of Mr. Launcelot Grosbeck, who will, doubtless

continue to muse by the water-courses of Stonewall, it not being feasible to retire to a more forsaken mere for the purpose of remaining ignorant that he should die a holy man. Such would be our just and reasonable expectations.

But the master who manages this panoramic performance, and such like, seems not to regard the unities of the piece, as such unities are concerned in its *denouement*; for while we are supposing that we have seen the last of this show, and are gathering ourselves up for an exodus, he slides in another scene and compels our attention to fasten itself thereon.

Sunrise here, in place of sunset, and cold December instead of September!

Rufus Grosbeck stands this morning at his study window looking forth—a somewhat unwonted situation in which to find this gentleman at this hour of the day. It happens thus

occasionally, however, as he is irregular in his rise and set, especially the latter.

He is unprepared for the scene that meets his gaze. For three days and nights a sullen east wind dashing frozen rain against his window, has alternated with a wild west wind that whirled snow in clouds before it. It was so last night and now——!

A powder of the finest, freshest snow covers all scars and removes all traces of conflict. It threads each deep green needle of the Norway pines yonder, with its flaxen filament. It fluffs the outlines of the garden flower-beds and lays its ermine soft upon the sleeping pansies. It coils a white rope to the rounds of the ladder leaning against the woodshed's roof. It rolls off in foamy wave after wave on the meadow yonder. It climbs the hill and stretches away, whitening the dark brows of the aged hemlock, that sentinel between sky and earth in the

picket line of the horizon. But this way, in the east, the scarlet sun is bursting through this line, and rose-petal vapors are puffing up the sky, drifting and curling away to the west. Now the rose-heart of the sun has turned to yellow, and is raying everywhere its molten splendor, tinting with gold the embroidery of frost upon the window panes, laying golden bands upon the snow, unfurling golden banners off on meadow and on hill. Such a morning, this, as makes a man oblivious of a wretched, sleepless night, oblivious of a defeated past. The most brow-beaten of fortune feels that he can go forth to battle again to-day.

One would expect a man of Rufus Grosbeck's temperament to be enraptured with this scene; and, as he turns quickly from its contemplation and seats himself on his table, taking pen in hand, we are satisfied that he has received an afflatus and will turn out

something congenial to his poetic mood, and ours. The circumstance that, as he turns, he looks at his watch, seems somewhat inconsonant with a fine phrensy. Its vicious snap jars upon our senses inharmonious with expected tuneful numbers, but we forget that as he dashes away at the poem.

It must be brief, though the god tears with greatest rage; for in a minute he lays down his pen. Neither should we have expected that this effusion would be addressed to his mother. We had not looked for such filial passion, and had not supposed that old Mrs. Grosbeck would be warmed up to sunrise sonnets at breakfast of a winter morning, before the mercury had come to something. Such, however, seems the direction of this inspiration, for Mr. Grosbeck now steps from his study with this slip of paper in his hand, and, entering the dining room — where a Teutonic

maid, not yet thawed to much energy of movement, is stepping solidly around in preparation of the breakfast table,—lays it on his mother's plate and goes out again. Nearly an hour later as the fine old lady sits over her toast and coffee, she reads as follows:

“I have decided to go to town to-day, Mother, and take the early train. I shall, probably, return to-morrow evening.

RUFUS.”

The old lady lays down the slip with equanimity and proceeds to her smoking cup. Rufus had said a day or two before that he was about ready to visit his publisher. There is nothing remarkable in his going except its early hour. She is glad he has so fine a day.

The evening is worthy of the morning. The western horizon gapes with crimson wounds that drop their heavy ichor on city spires and dome, and redden city windows

where the golden sun beats through; wounds that are not staunched till Venus, throbbing great and tender, rises to bind them up with love. Ready in the zenith waits the jealous little moon, lighting up to some purpose, now that her mighty rival has gone by.

The city scintillates. A jargon of sleigh-bells and merry voices fill the air. Elegant looking gentlemen hurry along the streets, and enter and alight from splendid equipages. Handsome homes hint their warmth and splendor through broad windows. At the door of one of these residences stands a gentleman we have seen before; not, it must be confessed, especially noticeable for elegance, though he has a certain carriage that preserves him from insignificance. As he enters the hall, murmuring his inquiries to the servant, another gentleman passes out: not, evidently, the acquaintance Grosbeck seeks

here, for he looks at the incomer with the quick, shrewd glance of the busy city man, who knows everybody in town, and sees you to be a stranger in the city. He hears, however, the question Grosbeck asks, and seeing the card intrusted to the servant, bows courteously as he passes out.

Grosbeck enters and is shown into the drawing-room, which is quite unoccupied, it being an unusual hour for calls. The city dinner is but just over, and positions for the evening are not yet taken. All this is very agreeable to Grosbeck, who wishes to see but one inmate of this house, and to see her alone. He cannot conceive a spur that would bring out the paces of a society man this evening.

CHAPTER XIII.

The sable Mercury wings his way aloft, bearing to the goddess the pasteboard in his hand, which her maid transmits, having cast an oblique look upon the name, as is her wont in all such transmissions; for the lady is in her boudoir, and the maid is dressing her hair for the evening. A less oblique glance would do, if obliquity were not her necessity, to reveal to the French girl at the lady's back that lady's agitation as reflected from the mirror before her, at the receipt of this card. A sudden pallor falls upon her face.

“Be quick, Toinette, and put my hair back

for this dress. I will not change it this evening. I shall not go out."

But to our troubled Emeline the maid's nimble fingers seem, one instant, to drag insufferably, as she would have flown into her visitor's presence; the next instant, to fly intolerably as she trembled at the thought of meeting him. She knows now that her long and strange perplexity is to have an end.

A pitifully agitated woman it is who descends the staircase finally in her dinner dress, stopping once, one hand upon her heart, the other clutching at the railing for support. But the lady who finally enters the drawing-room is no less, no other than Miss Longworth, with the Longworth aspect never so distinct. Grosbeck himself does not look unkingly. He feels at home in the atmosphere of this house and suitably surrounded. The mellow luxury of the beautiful apartment, with its nameless tone

and tint, carry into his nerves a subtle soothing and stimulus. He fits as comfortably to the elegant chair, into whose plush depths he sinks, as he did to the lichened log in the forest. The subdued glow of chandelier serves him for that September sun, and a similar, yet differing mood steals over him. The same half-sensuous, yet brighter, smile plays over his broad fair face, and seems to radiate from his tossing, yellow hair. His nervousness has vanished and his eyes betray the same self-confidence in his thought, and a greater arrogance. He is so sure it is all as he has planned it.

In such a frame did the entrance of Miss Longworth find him. His spirits had risen to a pitch of positive playfulness. He shrank away as far as possible from the door by which he expected she would enter, meaning to enjoy the searching of her eyes before she found him,

and to spring upon her from ambuscade, as it were, capturing her by a *coup des bras*.

In pursuance of this playful strategy he did not confront Miss Longworth until she stood beneath the full radiance of the chandelier. She had advanced to the center of the room and there stood. Grosbeck had started impetuously forward, but stopped. He had a sudden sensation as of a blow in the face, and certainly no real blow could have left stronger circumstantial evidence of itself thereon. His face — the poor gentleman! — was sadly streaked, red where the lashing fingers fell, white in the space between. Let none, henceforth, argue to him that Fate does not mete out even retributions. Emeline, huddled and crimsoned in the forest, was never so sorry a figure as he.

What does he see which so transforms him from his kingly, confident mood, to this abject

confusion? The tender lady whose love had slain all her maiden reticence and overflowed in red tides all the barriers of her will, in the forests; the towering torrent of confession from eyes at last unveiled, and welling forth fathomless yearning toward him, as she stood transfigured and divine upon the bridge; the gracious pleasant comrade of all the days before;—it was from these images that Grosbeck had evolved in the merrily bubbling crucible of his imagination and but a moment before had so beheld the form of her he would confront. And now not one fibre of all this material went toward the making up of this woman—*la grande dame sans merci*—before whom he cowered. He could not identify a single item in this figure, nor lay a finger anywhere upon his own.

“Why, how do you do! Mr. Grosbeck!”

That voice, too! Grosebeck’s petrification

took on an extra layer at the sound. He had forgotten all tones of Miss Longworth's voice except the tones of the last words he had heard her speak. For this much of that remarkable letter we have read was quite true. He had not lost the cadence of her slow *Good-night, dear, Good-night!* with their solemn joy and meaning of *no more Good-night, never Good-bye!* But this voice which now saluted him, he had surely never heard. Even in those first days when he had played society-man, she had never spoken so. This was the merest finelady tone to her indifferent evening caller—coldly cordial, with a freedom which said most clearly *thus far and no farther.*

Grosbeck could only falter feebly, "Miss Longworth!"

Then Emeline knew she had it all her own way. She had never imagined this man save in towering mastery of himself and everybody

else. It was thus that she devotedly idealized him, and she would have recoiled loyally from any suggestion of him in his present plight, crouching at bay, streaked red and white, his fluent tongue tied in pitiful embarrassment. But love had revealed to her many things and, in this moment, it shows her one more.

Miss Longworth was not reckoned and did not acknowledge herself to be impulsive, but just now her impulse was of the maddest sort. What, then, kept her from rushing to the side of this poor blusher, flinging her arms around his neck and crying out—the words were fairly shouting themselves in her ears—“*Love has conquered, Rufus! It was true—it is true—true, true!—Love conquers in the long run!*” Why? Let him or her answer who can.

With just enough softening of her polished notes as would most certainly convey to him the fact that she saw and pitied his confusion,

and attributed it to his unfamiliarity with such society, or society, in any proper sense at all, she said, as she sank with the best form prescribed by her set, into a luxurious chair.

"I am very glad to see you. Are you in town for the season?"

"I came to-day," said Grosbeck, faintly.

"Indeed! How very kind to call so soon!"
(*She should not have expected so prompt a call. In fact it was not the thing, was indeed, rustic,*)—adding,

"Is Mrs. Grosbeck with you?"

"No."

"Oh, then, you will not remain long, I fear." (*Of course you will not—on that account I can afford to be very indulgent of your queerness this time!*)

It was the parenthesis which sounded in Grosbeck's ear.

"I came on an errand," said he.

The lady laughed lightly. This country gentleman's speech had no polite reserves. One less sensitive than Grosbeck could not have missed this meaning, as she said pleasantly :

"Of course! I do not dream that you came for anything else! Your friends are grateful though that business brings you sometimes."

This state of things could not last. The least valorous worm will turn finally from under foot. Grosbeck had been slowly wriggling himself free from this dainty heel all this time, and was, at length, quite ready to rear. He rose and stood before her. Emeline quailed; but that he did not see. He spoke slowly and distinctly, and his face was quite pale.

"My errand was with you, Miss Longworth! I had expected a different result: but I had—I see now, no right to forecast a conclusion."

(Emeline is holding out desperately. She will not yield a hair's breadth until she must. The besieged of Calais are nothing to her.)

Grosbeck had come to his fullest stature, and stood there, every inch a king. He goes on in words he had never dreamed of using as applied to himself. He speaks with dignity, a strange pain vibrating through his words.

"I have learned a new thing, slowly and very surely, Miss Longworth. I could not rest until I had told you. It seemed right, necessary, that you should know it. It is strange, when you come to know it, how exactly even the balances are held by Fate."

His voice took on the old musing strain, as if he did *not* believe what he was saying. It sounded as it had in his first conversation with her, which grew to be an argument with himself. In fact it was rushing over him as he spoke; with a bitter sense of *unevenness* of

balance, and *inequality* of lot, how a woman—not this one—but another as in a dream or a play read long ago, had made a confession similar to that he had to make—in words such as he should use—yet not the same at all. Suddenly all that was but seeming, and no offset to this reality. Fate did not hold even balances if this were true—and nothing could ever be so true, he thought!

During his pause Emeline has risen, quite his match now, as she, pale too, and very dignified, stands unflinching.

“I do not understand you, Mr. Grosbeck,” she said, haughtily.

“You must understand me. My errand to town was to ask you to be my wife. But now I have only to say to you—good-bye.”

Emeline held out yet, though every reinforcement was wholly hopeless, every munition had failed. Perhaps he pitied her after all—he, who must know it all!

"Mr. Grosbeck!" she called.

He turned back and stood where he was. He had reached the door.

Her eyes searched him. Her voice was that of one who has right and authority. She said, "Do you love me?"

Was it a voice, hers, or the gurgling of the little swift, impassioned brook? Was the sudden dimness that of blurred vision, or the twilight of the sweet September evening? Was the softness beneath his feet that of the Axminster carpet, or the thickness of the fallen leaves upon the little bridge! Was it her hands that drew him, or his that drew her? What matter, so that his lips again rested on hers, so that he was sure, now, what man it was who spoke, and who echoed her words of that September evening, those words of solemn joy and certainty, "I do!"

But it was long before either said, *Good night!*

EPILOGUE.

The panorama is now over, the last scene slid past our eyes; and yet this old-fashioned and persistent showman, whose chief point it is—innocent of Goethe's dictum that a work of art must never have a moral—that his show is a *moral show*, detains us yet a moment longer to point that moral in a bit of epilogue. Doubtless this is a supernumerary office to my select circle of readers, whose discernment must have anticipated the *haec fabula docet* of this, which is, however, no fable. But, as I am not responsible for the panorama, so am I not for the epilogue, which he who runs may read, or forbear to read.

The recital of this epilogue is intrusted to none other than Mr. Rufus Grosbeck himself, who presents it in person, as follows:

STONEWALL, Jan. 1.

“Happy New Year, Emeline! I can make you this greeting as who can make it to another? For I know it is *new* and I know it is happy.”

(It is the exceedingly confidential character of the elision which induces Mr. Grosbeck to conceal from us its contents—not at all consideration for our feelings which we, in misplaced gratitude, may assign to him.)

. . . . “If to love you, Emeline, be a liberal education, I shall be the best educated man alive, for that future learning, the first installment of which I am receiving now, has been preceded by an education not less liberal, in being *loved by you*. Let none hereafter

teach that the course of true love never did run smooth. That is true only of the short run, Emeline! never of the *long run*!

“And here, partly to amuse you or to instruct you, and partly because it is yours and must not be withheld, I enclose this old letter, how old you will see, and understand it all, as I do now. I did not when it was written.

“I believe I shall throw up my fossils and their history, and write a book (you may suggest it would not be unhistoric of a fossil with which you have to do!) to prove that all those fellows were fools who have believed and taught the eternal predestination of man and wife in the ideal marriage. It is all Free Will, Emeline, under—and let no Calvinist claim me, in my enunciation of the doctrine—the mighty grace of Love. You have loved me with an everlasting love, and I, all unelecting, have yielded to its grace and been drawn with the cords of love and found my fate. But,

halloo! what is this—Free Will, or Necessity? Faith, I cannot tell. I'll go back to my fossils and prove that the *firmament was* the crust of the earth; for I am sure of only two things; that the very ground I tread has become to me as Heaven's floor; and that *Love always conquers in the Long Run!* "

THE END.

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